



PRESS RELEASE
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For Immediate Release

May 26, 2004

**SARASOTA MAN INDICTED ON
WEAPONS/SOLICITATION OF MURDER CHARGES**

Tampa - U.S. Attorney Paul I. Perez announced today the return of a superseding indictment of Wassam Taysir Hammoud of Sarasota on numerous federal firearms charges and charges relating to his alleged attempts to solicit others to retaliate against witnesses who testified against him in a previous federal trial. Hammoud was initially arrested on weapons charges contained in a criminal complaint on January 2, 2004 and was indicted on those charges on January 6, 2004. He remains in federal custody on those charges.

The thirteen-count superseding indictment includes the following charges: possession of firearms by a convicted felon; possession, manufacture and transfer of a silencer; and transfer of a firearm for use in a crime of violence. The additional new charges relate to Hammoud's alleged efforts to solicit others to murder a civilian witness who testified against him in an earlier federal firearms trial and to murder the special agent

of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) who investigated that earlier criminal case. The maximum sentence, if convicted, on the firearms charges ranges from five to ten years' imprisonment. The maximum sentence, if convicted, on the charges relating to his alleged attempts to solicit the crime of murder and retaliation, ranges from ten to twenty years' imprisonment.

Hammoud was convicted by a federal jury in June, 2002 and then he was sentenced in December, 2002 to one year house arrest and five years' probation. According to court documents, Hammoud made statements to FBI confidential witnesses that he was unjustly arrested and wanted to kill a confidential informant and an ATF agent. It also appeared that he allegedly researched the location and whereabouts of his intended victims. After further investigation, Hammoud was arrested on January 2, 2004 at his business in Sarasota for allegedly possessing a wide range of different firearms and a large quantity of ammunition while serving his federal sentence.

This case is being investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives , the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), the Southwest Florida Domestic Security Task Force, the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, and the Sarasota Police Department. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jay Hoffer.

Indictments and criminal complaints are merely formal charges that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws, and every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.